

# Utilizing Employment First to Achieve Inclusive Communities: Stakeholder Feedback on Ohio's Employment First Initiative

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## Background

Ohio's Employment First Initiative was created by an executive order signed by Governor Kasich in March 2012. The Ohio Employment First initiative, established in section 5123.022 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), establishes that "employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities be directed at community employment and that individuals with developmental disabilities are presumed capable of community employment." ORC 5123.022 (B) Employment First policy priorities include the expectation that youth with disabilities should have opportunities to pursue competitive, integrated employment, and that community employment must be considered in every person-centered plan.

As part of the Employment First initiative, an Employment First Taskforce was established, which includes six of Ohio's state agencies that serve individuals with developmental disabilities: Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD); Ohio Department of Education (ODE); Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS); Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM); Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (ODMHAS) and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Agency. These state agencies agreed in the *Ohio Employment First Taskforce Common Principles 2013* that Ohio needs "a coordinated state Employment First effort that examines existing practices in our system to identify and address barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities."

In FY 2016/2017, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) contracted with the University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCCEDD) to gather feedback and input from key stakeholders throughout the State of Ohio.

## Goal & Purpose

- Collect feedback and input from Employment First (EF) participants, including self-advocates, family members and professionals.
- Analyze barriers and challenges regarding a) Person-Centered Planning; b) Employment First and c) Community Life Engagement.
- Provide recommendations to improve the Person-Centered Planning process, Employment First implementation and Community Life Engagement.
- Review recommendations.



Forum Session with Stakeholders in Cincinnati

## Methodology

- Develop forum session protocol, key informant interview protocol and online survey.
- Recruit participants with flyer and e-flyer via listservs, websites, Facebook pages, mailings, calls, community partners, county boards of DD.
- Conduct ten (10) stakeholder forum sessions in five (5) regions of the state:
  - SW, SE, Central, NE, NW Ohio
- Conduct key informant interviews with residents and staff at two (2) state-run Developmental Centers.
- Conduct statewide online survey with stakeholders.

## Data Analysis

### Demographic Information

- Combined and categorized based on demographic variable

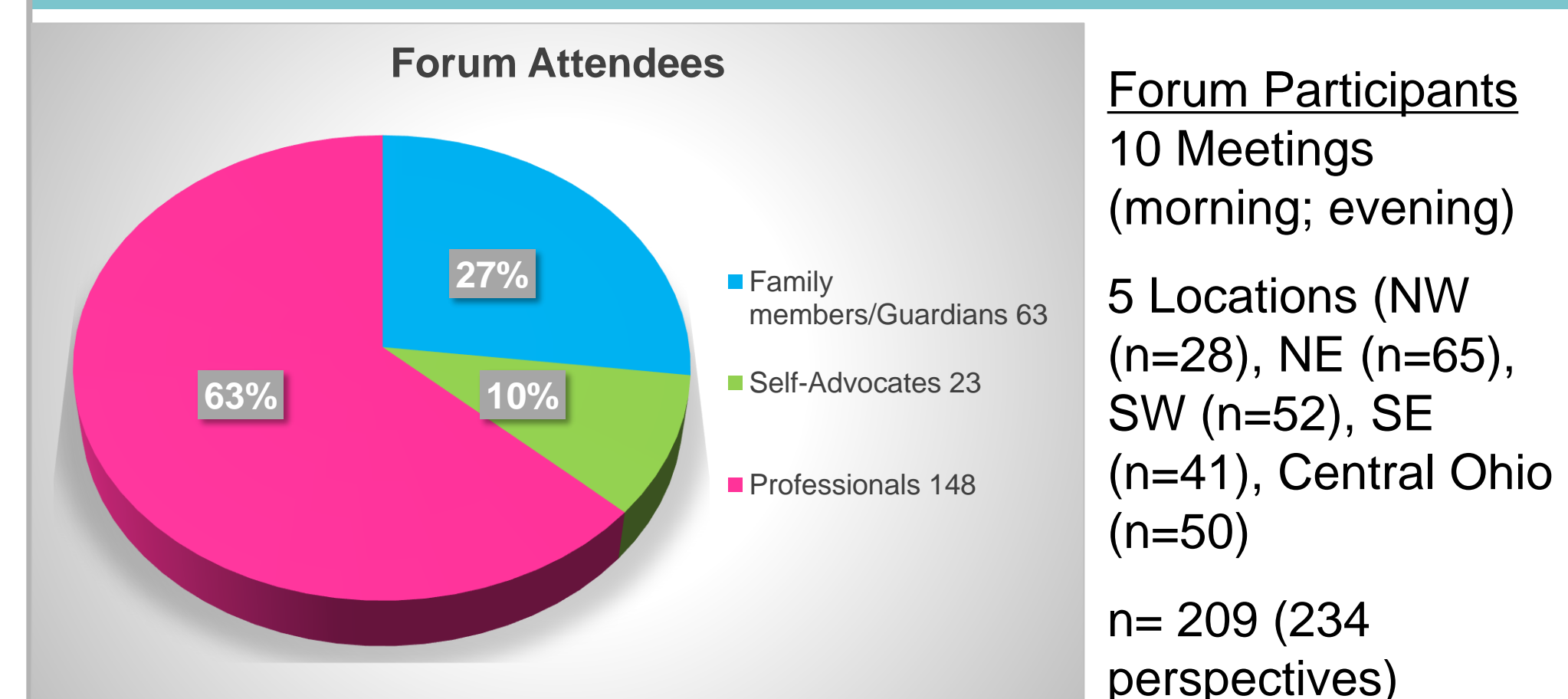
### Quantitative Data

- Quantitative information categorized into subgroups based on respondent type and theme

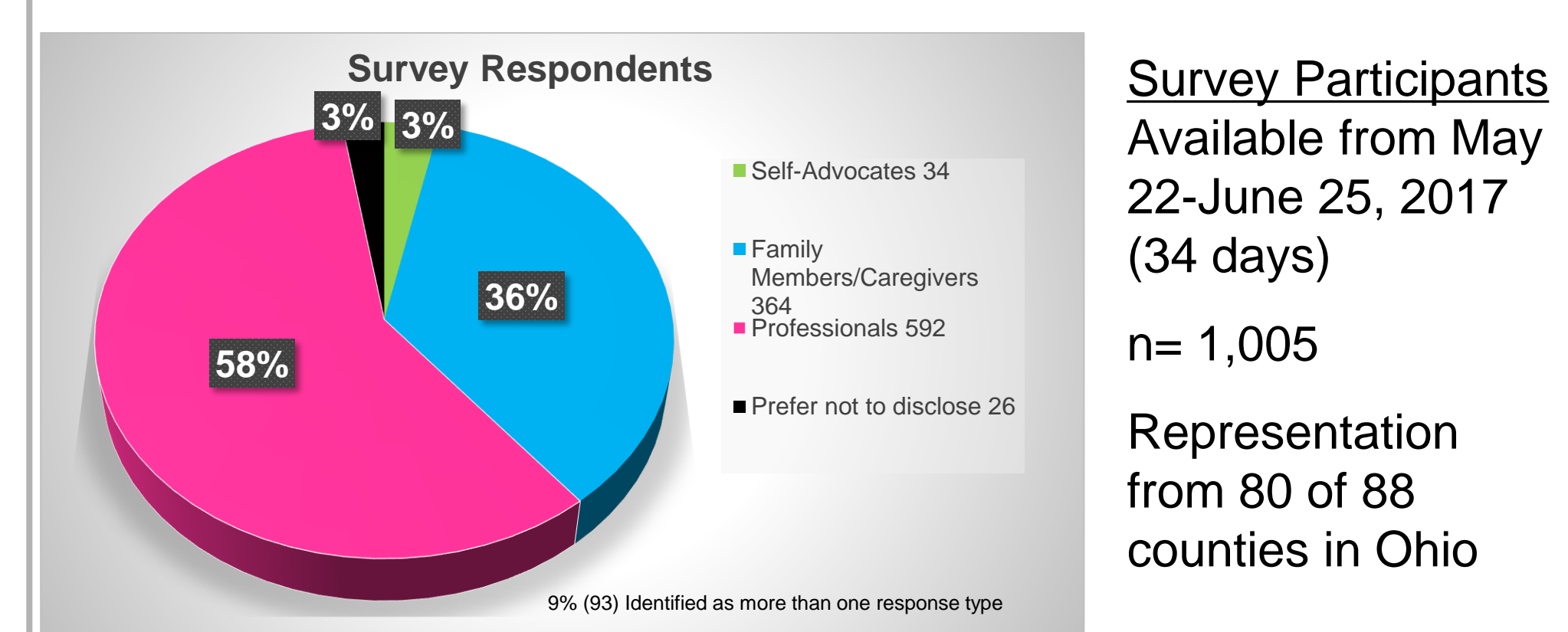
### Qualitative Data

- Data compiled and thematically analyzed individually by data set
- Compiled and thematically analyzed combined via Dedoose
  - Main themes with multiple subthemes
  - Quotes from data

## Participants



Key Informant Interviews were conducted with two (2) staff members and seven (7) self-advocates at two (2) Developmental Centers in two (2) different regions



## Select Findings and Recommendations: Person-Centered Planning

- Almost 79% of professionals reported that the person they serve has gone through the person-centered planning process, with 54.7% of family members and 46.7% of self-advocates reporting that they went through the process.
- Aggregate data of professionals, family members and self-advocates showed that the majority reported that they were asked about interests (86%), abilities (81%) and preferences (79%) in the person-centered planning process. Seven percent (7%) reported that none of these were asked.

THEME	SUB-THEME	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE
Individualization	Client Vision	"Listen to the individual, really listen [and] see the individual's dreams or goals as attainable." (Professional)
	Less Generic Process	"To make it individual. Not all rules apply to every individual" (Family Member)
Resources	Funding	"Follow through always seems to be an issue due to funding" (Professional)
	Time	"More time to work with students and family with less paperwork" (Family Member)
Guidance	Providers	"Better trained staff to navigate difficult family dynamics." (Professional)
	Families	"More frequent contact with persons assisting with the planning process" (Family member)

### Recommendations

- Increase education for family members and self-advocates on the Person-Centered Planning process.
- Continue education and provide ongoing guidance for professionals on the Person-Centered Planning process.
- Increase focus on Person-Centered Planning to allow appropriate time and resources for the development of an individualized Person-Centered Plan for each client.

## Select Findings and Recommendations: Employment First

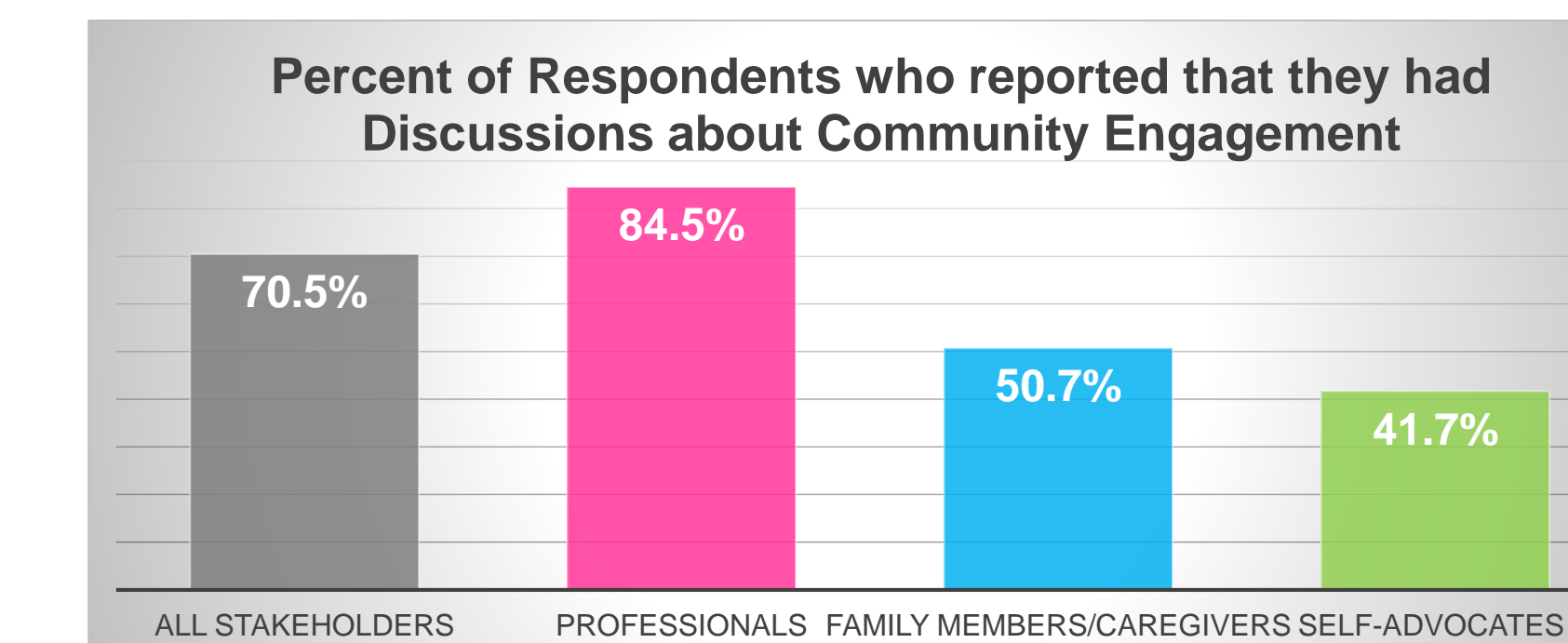
- 80.6% of stakeholders had heard of "Employment First". Professionals were much more likely to have heard of it (89.9%) than family members (68.2%) and self-advocates.
- 83.1% of professionals reported that EF had been considered in planning meetings, while 66.8% of family members and 71.4% of self-advocates reported this.
- 66.3% of professionals reported successes with gaining employment for clients, while 38.1% of family members and 35% of self-advocates reported having success.

THEME	SUB-THEME	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE
Job Opportunities	Local	"Create more local opportunities" (Professional & Family Member)
	Skill-Based	"After they are working at their first job, have a way to get them more skills to progress and get a better job." (Family Member)
Support from Providers	Realistic Expectations	"Quit viewing [employment] as the first and/or only option: it's unrealistic." (Professional)
	Maintaining Jobs	"Individuals need support maintaining jobs." (Professional)
Training	Providers	"Improvement can always be made through professionals making it a priority to do continued education." (Professional)
	Employers	"Talk to employers about employing people [with] disabilities" (Self-Advocate)

### Recommendations

- Continue to develop local job opportunities.
- Increase opportunities to build upon existing job skills for career development.
- Set realistic expectations.
- Provide longer-term supports to maintain jobs.
- Provide continued training for service providers on job development, job coaching and career development.
- Provide information and training for employers on employment of people with disabilities.

## Select Findings and Recommendations: Community Life Engagement



THEME	SUB-THEME	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE
More Opportunities	Jobs	"Offer more careers, choices, and supports within the community" (Professional & Family Member)
	Social	"More opportunities for him to have friends and do things with them." (Family Member)
Support from Providers	Training for	"Better training and pay for direct support professionals" (Family Member)
	Guidance from	"Improvement in providers' ability to support people in the community." (Professional & Family Member)
Transportation Options	Affordable	"Increase affordable transportation options 24/7" (Professional)
	Accessible	"You need more wheelchair accessible transportation" (Family Member)

### Recommendations

- Improve communication about community engagement, services and supports between professionals, family members and self-advocates.
- Continue to develop local job opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for social interactions and social life in the community.
- Improve training and expectations and increase pay for direct service professionals.
- Develop innovative transportation options.

## Limitations

- Convenience sample (forums & survey)
- Pre-selected participants from Centers
- Findings may not be generalizable
- Recommendations provided may not improve overall outcomes for general population of providers, family members and self-advocates in Ohio

## Report

The full report "Stakeholders' Feedback on Ohio's Employment First Initiative" can be found here:

[https://www.uccedd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Stakeholder-Feedback-on-Ohio-Employment-First\\_Final-reduced.pdf](https://www.uccedd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Stakeholder-Feedback-on-Ohio-Employment-First_Final-reduced.pdf)

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